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**VIOLIN PLAYING.**

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JOHN DUNN.



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# VIOLIN PLAYING

BY

JOHN DUNN.

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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages were originally written as a series of articles for THE STRAD and in plain and simple style, in order to place before the violin student some general guiding rules and principles of correct violin technique, as well as useful hints on how to master the same.

The rules and method, etc., set forth are simply the ordinary results of my own long experience as both teacher and public soloist, together with a keen selection of the best points peculiar to the most eminent violinists of our time.

Each portion of the whole subject follows on in systematically arranged order according to the degree of difficulty, thus making reference to any particular point more easy.

Without claiming to have founded any new system of technique, style or school, an honest attempt has been made to explain the most simple and natural method and means of obtaining such really correct technique as would form a sound preliminary towards attaining the highest degree of style and polish always noticeable in the very finest players.

It is hoped that teachers also will find some useful hints to simplify their labours in the teaching of "slow" or "difficult" pupils, and should any struggling violinist by the perusal of this book be guided out of a fault or have his difficulties in any way lessened, the writer will be more than compensated for his small endeavours.

JOHN DUNN.

LONDON, *May*, 1898.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

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**I**N presenting this Second Edition, the author has taken advantage of the opportunity to revise and correct many passages of the original text which were not to his particular satisfaction, and in doing this somewhat tedious work he trusts that he has succeeded in making all points perfectly clear which might otherwise have been a trifle obscure in the eyes of an amateur.

It should also be explained that haste in publishing the first Edition, during the author's absence on his extended concert-tours, prevented any proofs being submitted to him, and thus several inaccuracies in hurriedly-written articles, etc., which were unavoidably overlooked at the time of their first appearance in *THE STRAD*, were reproduced in book form as they originally stood.

In the task of revising, the author specially desires to acknowledge his obligations and indebtedness to his friend and pupil, Miss Olivia Wyville Stanhope, for her most valuable assistance.

JOHN DUNN.

DUNHOLME, ELSTREE,  
MIDDLESEX.



# VIOLIN PLAYING.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Introductory.

QUALITIES INDISPENSABLE TO THE IDEAL VIOLINIST —  
HINTS ON THE CHOICE OF A TEACHER — SOME  
TRICKS OF PRETENDING PROFESSORS EXPOSED.

**I**N a recent conversation I had with the esteemed editor of *THE STRAD*, that gentleman expressed a desire that I should write some articles on the above subject, and as I had previously often thought of doing so for my own private pleasure, I need hardly say little pressing was necessary to invite me to so agreeable a task.

Though by no means the first to write on the subject of Violin Playing, Violin Technics, etc., I trust that my views and opinions may be none the less interesting by comparison, differing as they do from others in many important points which will be explained. My first two chapters will be merely preliminary, giving a few general remarks on the qualities requisite in a violinist of talent, hints on the choice of a teacher, the choice of a violin, bow, and on stringing the violin, etc.

To commence, I may say that the various qualities essential to the making of an *ideal* violinist, or of the nearest approach thereto, are quite too numerous to mention. Still there are certainly a few *ideal* points that are, more or less, present or absent in every violinist, and without

which, however much general musical talent anyone may possess, his or her success in violin playing will be more or less handicapped. These are, beside a correct ear, the power of mentally making nice calculations on the finger-board, and a bow arm sensitive to the minutest shades of pressure; a broad hand with strong jointed long fingers tapering towards the tips, the tip of the fourth finger almost on a line with the tip of the first, and all four nearly of the same length. A long thumb to help the fingers in reaching the high positions, finger joints loose in preference to those that are stiff. Still, the firm and stiff joints are better than too loose ones, as they can be made loose by practice much more easily than excessively loose or double-jointed fingers can be made firm. And firmness is necessary. Long arms and powerful wrist, a short rather than long neck, square jaw, full chest, inexhaustible energy, perfect control of the power of the emotions, sufficient love for the art to be more absorbed in the rendering of the piece than anxiously pre-conscious of any disapproval or otherwise on the part of the listeners, and last but not least, true genius, which means of course—including all the above—a thousand-and-one qualities combined. With all these, and many other qualities necessary to form an ideal violinist, is it remarkable that so few players come to the front? However, so long as one is possessed of a good ear, an artistic temperament, and a hand not too ill-adapted for the instrument, perseverance will generally do a great deal towards overcoming the rest. Quite a multitude of drawbacks, too, may be vanquished, provided the teacher chosen to guide the student's course be of first rate order. But let the teacher be mediocre and the pupil only moderately talented, then the result will be something like the "blind leading the blind," nothing but disappointment. Then again, another point not sufficiently considered, but very serious in its consequences is, that faults learnt during the first year or so usually have a marvellously clinging tendency to the very last, and though an exceptionally gifted student will



have more power in ultimately throwing them off than a player of merely ordinary talent, yet will it be plainly obvious how much is saved, in any case, by having a thoroughly good and competent master from the very beginning.

Acquiring the rare art of *playing* the violin is a very different thing from merely learning what may be termed "catgut scraping."

How many players, alas, both professional and amateur, find that, after wasting several years of study under an inefficient master, though probably quite unconscious of their mistake at the time, they have learnt next to nothing, and even that little only to have to unlearn.

A short time ago a professional violinist told me that he attributed his want of progress to not knowing the correct manner of holding his violin, and that once he could feel sure he was right on that point, he might practise to some advantage. He had been playing for upwards of twenty years, and yet did not know one of the first things to be learnt.

In this place a few hints on the choice of a teacher may be useful alike to advanced players, and parents desiring that their children should commence in the most advantageous manner.

At the present day, supposing we divide those who teach the violin, including those who pretend to teach the same, into four classes—to the first would belong the principal violin professors of the leading conservatoires, colleges and academies, and most of the first-class solo players of the day. Such teachers only are able to train a student to the highest degree of perfection. To the second class would belong the best of the players engaged in the leading orchestras. With this class might also be included some of our best provincial teachers, who appear occasionally—and mostly indifferently—as soloists. Many of this class make fairly good teachers up to a certain point, but it is surprising how many of them are, if not entirely careless, still, a long way short

of being quite conscientious, to say the least. The third class are the less distinguished orchestral players, and others of similar ability spread about the provinces. Some of these make very good elementary teachers, but the majority transmit a faulty style and method, and are to be avoided. Then there are those belonging to the fourth class, who know next to nothing about the art, and who should be prohibited from teaching altogether. Sometimes the individual is an "organist" or a "'cellist—pianist—organist—teacher of singing—violin professor," or even a "bacon-factor," a "postman," or a "paperhanger," filling in spare time by posing—or rather imposing—as a "professor" of the violin, or in some instances opening an "academy" announced in various degrees of pretentiousness down to a simple card in the front window. Such quacks are a nuisance, and are only to be patronized by people who merely toy with the art for a time, only to throw it up in despair and disgust. However, as things are, the majority of pupils who are able to afford it commence under the above mentioned fourth, third, and second classes of teachers.

Why so few commence with a first-class teacher may be to a certain extent due to a false notion prevalent that first-class teachers are averse to teaching beginners. True, some are, but the notion arises chiefly from the fact that the academies and conservatoires and the like always relegate beginners to the care of pupil teachers and cheap masters, in order that the surplus from the fees thus gained may to some extent make up for the deficit usual in the advanced department. This is not usually understood by the multitude, and some provincial professors take an advantage by giving themselves the airs of a first-class academy professor. They circulate and encourage the stupid notion that they are "above" teaching elementary pupils, and decline to take beginners at all. As a matter of fact, however, nine-tenths of their pupils are elementary, and most of them only a few lessons removed from beginners. The multi-

tude have thus been led to look upon it as the correct thing, first of all, to place Mary or Johnny under a cheap and often very indifferent professor, of course with the ultimate intention, when sufficiently advanced, of having him or her "finished off" by a leading professor, either in or out of their district. But as the "finishing off" process can never be successfully accomplished until the groundwork has been taught on correct principles, instead of the students receiving what they expected, they find themselves hopelessly trying to undo the faults acquired under their previous master.

The first two years, or one year, or even six months under an indifferent master are sufficient to considerably hamper, or even altogether cramp, a student's future style, and all the good teaching in the world is often unequal to the task of correcting faults thus acquired. This is why so many, even talented players, are thwarted in their efforts at progressing, and seldom, if ever, rise above mediocrity—then only to transmit their faults to others. It is only those who are conscious of their faults, or who thoroughly understand all the details of violin playing, who can fully realise the importance of having a thoroughly good and conscientious first-rate teacher, painstaking with whatsoever degree of talent happens to be under his or her training.

Some pupils often require the most minute explanations, and for such I should certainly not recommend *some* foreign professors, for the simple reason that it not infrequently happens that the peculiar accent or idiom of the foreigner will make their explanations to young students more perplexing than instructive. This would not apply to advanced students, where minute explanation is less needed. Style is the chief thing an advanced student needs to consider when choosing a professor. More will be said of style later. We will conclude these few hints on the choice of a teacher by saying it is better to lay aside the cost of a few weeks' cheap lessons, and instead of taking a dozen doubtful ones invest in one occasional lesson of a thoroughly reliable order.

## CHAPTER II.

**On the Choice of a Violin and Bow.**

## ADVICE REGARDING GENERAL ADJUSTMENT AND REPAIRS.

I AM reminded by a facetious friend of mine of making two omissions in my last chapter important towards the complete success of a violinist. These are long flowing locks and an unpronounceable name. Absurd as it may appear, I really am inclined to believe that an uncommon name and a limited amount of "Samsonian strength" are, to a certain extent, calculated not only to single one out from the multitude, but by investing one with a feeling of isolated uncommonness, tend to act as a stimulus to more individuality in one's artistic efforts. Apart from this, who will question the influence these attributes still continue to exercise over our British public? They are the completion of the virtuoso's war-paint. Still, carried to excess, I consider that long hair and an unpronounceable name are likely to militate slightly against one's success, just the same as an extreme in the opposite direction would.

Before going into the details of "Violin Playing," I will give an odd hint or two on the choice of a violin, bow, strings, and stringing a violin, etc. The great demand for violins, owing to the enormous increase of students—chiefly of the gentler sex—makes it difficult nowadays to obtain anything like a good violin at a moderate cost. The advantages to the student of having a fine-toned old instrument, for all purposes, cannot be

over-estimated. There are many deserving players, however, whose pockets do not admit of their acquiring even such moderately expensive old violins as those of Gagliano, Rocca, Pressenda, Guadagnini, Grancini, Ruggerius, Lupot, Stainer, etc., etc. These instruments are rapidly becoming very scarce indeed, and hence the prices, ranging from £50 to £400, are considerably on the rise. The same may be said of old French, English, and German violins ranging from £10 to £40. All of these are good for the student's purpose, besides many other fiddles possessing very fine tone, though the maker may possibly be unknown. For beginners and those unable to afford the price of old instruments, some good new maker should be chosen, or the best of the numerous cheap *manufactured* articles. Some of these, varnished all over, have at least a *clear* tone, which is as much as can be expected considering the process of making, or rather manufacturing them. They are generally made with baked wood. Beginners had perhaps better not learn for the first year on expensive instruments, for fear of possible damage through inexperience in handling them.

For public solo playing there are none to equal Stradivarius violins of the best period (flat model); They possess the greatest solidity and sweetness of tone combined with the fullest power. Some twenty or so of these are really unique, but to bring out their manifold capabilities requires the touch of a real artist; and I cannot understand why it is that amateurs of means should be allowed to indulge their miserly selfishness by depriving the world of the privilege of listening to the soul-stirring tones of these human creations. If they *do* object to "parting with them at any price" they might, at least, lend them to some favourite player, and thus allow the instruments to be properly used by those who alone are best able to use them, take care of them, and for whom they were rightly intended. Some few by Joseph Guarnerius, though different in character of tone, are about as fine even as the best Strads.



After these come Bergonzis, odd specimens by Maggini, Guadagnini, Amati, etc.

The proper mounting of the violin is the next important matter, and when not correctly done the tone given out will not be resonant, neither will it sing freely. Hundreds of fiddles at the present time are suffering from this complaint, simply because their owners do not know anything of the suitability of the fittings of their particular instrument. Our leading dealers and repairers cannot always help them towards obtaining that absolute perfection of fitting which to a nicety allows the fiddle to breathe and sing with the fullest breadth and freedom; though I have seen some wonderful changes made in violins which have been repaired and remounted by experienced hands.

As regards the sound-post I agree with Spohr that the ear of the performer is the best judge, but much careful experiment is required to obtain the fullest results.

*Re bows.* Good bows are so cheap compared with good violins that there is no reason why any aspiring violinist should not possess one. Jas. Tubbs and E. N. Voirin have made bows as good and even better for use than the majority of fancy-priced Tourtes. The former maker is still turning out very fine all-round bows from four to ten guineas each, according to quality of stick and mounting. Voirin bows vary very much—as do those of other makers—some being simply flabby and worthless and others particularly fine, especially for fine gradations of tone and crisp staccato, indeed there are none finer. The best Tubbs bows excel other good bows for producing great breadth of tone. Other good makers are Dodd, Peccate, Vuillaume, and two or three others, nearly, but not quite, as good as the above. In choosing a bow the weight and strength required is a matter of taste. Lightness without being top-heavy, elasticity of spring, combined with the most resisting power sideways as well as from downward pressure are the chief characteristics of a perfect bow. The

hair of a bow will require renewing after perhaps about 200 hours hard playing; the fibre of the hair being worn out it loses its bite, and brings out a dead and uncertain tone which is apt to whistle. To ensure correct and thorough hairing with first-class quality of hair it will be advisable to go—or send in cases made for the purpose—to some first-class firm. Damage to the nut and head are often the result of work done by incompetent hands. Placing confidence in an experienced professor's choice of your violin and bow is usually safest and best, if he be trustworthy.

## CHAPTER III.

## On the Choice of Strings.

## STRINGING THE INSTRUMENT AND KEEPING THE PEGS IN ORDER.

THE next thing to see to is the selection of good strings. Strings are as important a factor towards fine playing as a properly fitted violin and perfectly suitable bow. Bad strings are truly the bane of the violinist's existence. Often a performance is totally ruined by the perverse whistling of a string—especially when it happens to be the E. Then there is the difficulty of getting one's strings all correspondingly true in fifths, and when this feat is accomplished, they gradually become false in fifths after being on any considerable length of time—referring, of course, to the lower strings—this makes matters more trying.

Italian strings are the best if they are of good manufacture. Unfortunately, somehow, our London vendors do not seem to have any knowledge of the *very* best Italian makers of gut strings. At any rate I personally have not succeeded in obtaining any Italian strings *par excellence* in this country. I am obliged to procure mine—the best Italian strings possible—direct from headquarters on the continent. I think as a boon to violinists weary of the class of strings they are “favoured” with in this country, I shall have to make some arrangements to supply the violin world with really perfectly fine Italian strings, without any nonsense



about testing them beforehand, etc. The so-called "tested" strings are in my very humble opinion all mere sham. How is it possible to test whether a string be clear enough for *solo* playing before you have actually tried it with the bow? And, again, how are the fifths likely to correspond with the other strings, already correspondingly true, on the fiddle, when they (the "tested" ones) have not been tried together on the fiddle they are intended to be used upon? The best silver covered G strings I have as yet discovered are sold by Hart, Wardour Street.

The exact thickness of strings found suited to the violin should be carefully marked off on a good string-gauge, and afterwards strictly adhered to. Strings too thick for a particular violin are apt to whistle or sound muffled, and then thinner ones should be tried, though at times even thin strings will whistle in damp and muggy atmospheres. Usually, the thinner the string the clearer the tone, but for general purposes fairly thick strings are best, so long as the "whistling tendency" is avoided.

In putting on an E string, the drawing it up to pitch usually pulls over the bridge a shade, and often when drawing up too suddenly, the bridge is even liable to be forced (forward) down altogether and broken. This catastrophe is frequently accompanied by the sound-post falling, and other mischief. It is always advisable, therefore, after drawing up a string, to see that the bridge is well erect. When it is not, the safest manner of proceeding is to allow your thumb and first finger to support the bridge from behind, by nipping, as it were, each string in turn, close against the bridge. This prevents any possibility of it falling, while your other thumb and finger push it gently into an erect position from the other side. Correctly, the bridge should lean slightly towards the tailpiece.

In the management of the bow, see that the stick always has an inward bend, even when screwed up for playing, and never omit to screw it down to the lowest

degree when it is not being used. The bow should be well resined before commencing to practise. A bow should never be allowed to remain without wrapping. A little leather, round where the thumb touches, will save the wrapping from too frequently becoming loose. The bow (stick), as well as the violin, should be kept clear of resin and dust with a soft cloth. Besides affecting the tone of a violin, clogging resin and dust injures the varnish.

A word about pegs. If the strings are put on correctly at the peg end, *i.e.*, with the end turned under the string towards the side of its particular peg, the pegs will only require an occasional application of chalk and soap, not too much of the latter, and they will move quite easily and hold well without much pressure after being turned. Neglected pegs move stiffly and require extra pressure to make them hold. This enlarges the peg-holes and increases the difficulty of tuning to a nicety, not to mention the disagreeable grating sound attending each turn of the peg.

## CHAPTER IV.

**On the General Posture.**

THE MANNER OF HOLDING THE VIOLIN AND BOW AS  
ACCEPTED BY THE LEADING ARTISTS OF THE DAY.

**G**ENERAL posture, and holding the violin and bow, will now receive our attention. These must be done separately at first. Stand, resting your weight chiefly on the left foot, with the right foot slightly forward, your body being parallel with your music on the music stand. Keep slightly to the left of the stand, otherwise the scroll of the violin will interfere with your reading the music. The violin, held hanging the while in the hollow between your thumb and first finger, should be now raised to the left side of your neck, and accommodated to your left jaw bone, your head looking straight in front, and *not* twisting to the right or the left. The left hand should hold the neck of the violin sufficiently in front of you to enable you to draw the bow parallel with the bridge, without forcing the right shoulder forward. The violin need not be held quite in a straight line with the nose, but will incline somewhat to the left, the scroll of the violin being usually about on a line with the end of the left shoulder. As regards the exact position of the neck of the violin between the thumb and first finger, this usually varies according to the pupil's state of advancement. Beginners find it almost impossible to hold the neck in any other manner than by resting it quite in the hollow, touching the flesh between the thumb

and first finger. They further have a lingering desire to allow the palm of the hand to come in contact with the underneath portion of the neck, just as though it everlastingly itched to "touch wood and come good." The position becomes "good," however, only by being kept off "wood," *i.e.*, the neck, and instead of the neck's being allowed to fall quite down in the hollow afore-mentioned, it should rest partly on the lower joint and partly against (inclined towards the inner side of) the middle joint of the thumb, and on the other side, almost quite below the lowest joint of the first finger. Under the neck, between the thumb and finger, there will be space enough to put a pencil through, or still larger according to the size of the hand. The tip of the thumb will point almost perpendicularly upwards, peering nearly half an inch according to the size of hand, above the finger-board, while the lower joint will bend slightly underneath the neck, giving more freedom to the other two supports. Some students, instead of keeping the tip of the thumb above the finger-board, have a tendency to hold their thumb horizontally on the neck, the tip nearly touching the G string peg. A habit so faulty as this should be carefully guarded against.

Opposite the thumb, if the hand, slightly under the lowest joint of the first finger, touches the neck at the correct place above described, then the fourth finger side of the hand will be thrown out about an inch from the neck. The violin should be held up so that the scroll is on a line with the chin, and rather firmly, but not at all stiffly, between the thumb and below the first finger, at the points above mentioned. No other part of the hand should touch the neck.

To do all this without falling into faulty habits will require very thoughtful attention on the pupil's part, and probably constant correction on the part of the teacher.

In learning how to hold the bow at first, both hands require to be at liberty. The left hand will assist, by holding the stick midway, the hair facing the student. Place the inner side—not the centre—of the tip of the

right hand thumb on the inside of the stick close to the nut, and the remainder of the thumb's tip will rest on the edge of the ebony nut. Now allow all the fingers except the fourth to fall in a natural curve over the top of the stick, the stick touching each finger only at the point where you might draw a straight line between a quarter inch below the first joint of the third finger, to just above the first joint of the first finger (the line would cut the first joint of the second finger on its side nearest the first finger). In speaking of *below* the first joint, etc., *below* means here towards the tip of the finger, and *above* in the direction towards the knuckle. The bow is held to a large extent by the second finger and the thumb. The first finger should not "clutch" the bow stiffly, but should be held freely, ready either for heavy pressure, or lighter shades, as required. For heavy bowing, the first finger presses on its side assuming a slight curve and separating from the second finger except at its tip. The pressure point is a little below its second joint, and not *above* it (*above* meaning towards the knuckle). The majority of young players are apt to allow their first finger to press above the second joint, causing the hand to be thrown in an unnatural position, stiffening the wrist, and altogether altering the position of the arm. Correctly held with the thumb and first three fingers, there will be no difficulty about the fourth finger, as it will just reach the top of the stick and rest easefully close against the third finger. Beyond occasionally balancing or steadying the stick, it plays no part and might be called the dummy. It will not be long enough to overlap the stick like the other three fingers. The tips of the first three fingers will rest almost closely together. Beginners often find an advantage in stretching their fourth finger away from the others towards the screw, thus counterbalancing top-weight. This, however, will not be found at all necessary if the bow is held correctly. The third finger should touch, but not clutch, the stick just *below* the first joint, the second finger still nearer and touching

the joint near the first finger. The student may, when quite able to hold the violin and bow comfortably, proceed to place the bow on separate strings at about an inch distant from the bridge, and draw down and up, from one end of the bow to the other, keeping it parallel with the bridge. Commence at the heel of the bow, keeping the wrist loose and moveable, while holding the thumb rather firmly against the bow.

The manner of holding the violin and bow just explained is the only one to which the student should endeavour to adhere, at any rate as nearly as the shape of the hand (and other conditions) will allow. It must not be supposed, however, that the holding of the violin, or the bow—particularly as regards the holding of the violin by the left hand—should always be maintained in one set, rigid manner. This applies to beginners as well as advanced students. For instance, in many awkward progressions the fingering would become cramped if the tip of the thumb were not allowed to drop to, say, the level of the fingerboard, or even lower. Except, perhaps, in reaching with the fourth finger over to the G string, the beginner will find little difficulty in keeping to a fairly rigid position of the left hand—and this is perhaps advisable until a thorough grasp of the normal position is acquired.

The position of the thumb on the bow should be opposite the second finger. This may vary slightly with different performers, but only very slightly. A great many players, I believe, place their thumb opposite the *first* or between the second and third fingers. Neither of these methods are as good as the afore-mentioned.

The thumb's joint must bend slightly outwards and never at all inwards except when playing at the heel.

A great deal of freedom must be allowed the first finger, being as it is the medium of pressure, as also of non-pressure, which is possible by its kind permission *only*. Still the correct point at which the first finger touches the bow will scarcely vary at all whatever kind of bowing be performed. Perhaps for light or



“hopping” bowing it may touch a little nearer towards the tip, and for heavy bowing the least shade in the opposite direction. Such liberties as these are not intended for beginners.

Practising drawing the bow along the open string is a capital means of learning straight bowing. Alas! how many players have acquired this? Observe each member of the first violins in any of our orchestras and what do we see? Straight bowing—perhaps?—but at what a variety of angles with the bridge. In order to attain a uniform straightness of bowing, perhaps the best method is to practise half bows first. Upper half from middle to point, and lower half from middle to heel and *vice versa*.

Try to remember exactly at what point your upper arm should pause, in order to keep the bow parallel with the bridge after moving from the middle to the heel and *vice versa*. From the middle to the point—if the arm is long enough—the forearm will simply have to drop gradually until it is in a straight line with the upper arm, but remember the whole thing depends on the upper arm knowing its correct stopping place. The wrist, too, plays an important part in straight bowing. At the middle of the bow the wrist and hand should be about on a flat level with the forearm, whereas from the middle to the heel it must make a gradual “dip.” It must from the same point to the opposite end of the bow assume an opposite tendency.

## CHAPTER V.

## On Fingering Generally.

THE VARIOUS POSITIONS—SCALES RECOMMENDED—THE  
MODERN ORCHESTRAL “PRINCIPAL” OR (SO-CALLED)  
“LEADER.”

NOW we proceed to the fingering. The position already given of the left hand holding the neck is called the *first position*. To the beginner it is absolutely indispensable that he should obtain a fair knowledge and facility in this before attempting higher flights. It is the basis of the whole mechanism of the left hand. It is generally found the easiest in which to play in tune. The others are more difficult, because the relative distances between the notes being less, the higher the hand proceeds up the fingerboard, the greater the difference any slight deviation from the note makes. The fingers should be placed firmly on the strings. The greatest firmness is obtained when they fall on the very utmost point of their tips with all the joints bending outwards.

This will be difficult at the student's elementary stages, as also in some cases the curling up of the fourth finger when the third finger has to be pressed down. All the fingers should learn to move independently, and this, as well as the preceding rule, must be overcome by continual attention and perseverance. The fourth finger pressed down gives the same note as the following open string. Now some beginners never seem to be sure when to use the one and when the other. Probably this



is why their teachers allow them to use open strings on all occasions.

It requires much experience to know exactly when it is best to use open strings or when fourth finger. The principal object for the use of the fourth finger in ordinary passages is to avoid too much crossing strings.

The open string is to be preferred for ease and clearness in scale passages. Violin playing differs from piano playing in respect of lifting up each finger as you put down the next. On the violin any fingers just used are allowed to remain down on the string except those above the note being sounded, say, for instance, if a note has to be repeated immediately after playing the next note above it, or if instead of the note being repeated, the passage ascends another note or two on the same string.

The slur in violin playing means two or more notes played in one stroke (slowly as a rule) of the bow. The bow must be carefully managed, so as to use the same quantity of bow for each note, if there are several notes in the slur. Others besides beginners commit the error of jerky playing caused through incorrectly gauging the exact quantity of bow required for each note of a slur. Spohr's "School" is very good for gaining a perfect knowledge in this respect.

The whole range of the first position extends from the open G on the fourth string, to the lower B natural on the first string, with the next note (C) above taken by extending the fourth finger.

After a fair amount of facility has been acquired in this position the student may proceed to the third position. The best way to learn to calculate the exact place the hand must occupy up the neck for this position, is to place the first finger on, say B (second string) in the first position, and make a sudden glide of the finger two notes higher to D on the same string, allowing the hand to "shift" simultaneously with the finger, so that the thumb occupies about the same position, or a shade higher, in relation to the first finger, as it did in the first position.

The fourth finger will come more into play in this position, and a peculiarity is the extension of the fourth finger to just one note beyond its natural falling place, and when touching each string very lightly this gives four, full round-toned, natural harmonics, one on each string. These are most useful for obtaining many charming effects peculiar to the violin.

After gaining a thorough knowledge of the first and third positions, the sooner the other positions are learnt the better. The easiest to master is the fifth. Here the fingering resembles that of the first, but the hand being a fifth higher, the fingers which play the same notes in the first position on the A string, for instance, will now be playing them on the D string, and so on. The notes in the fifth position falling on the E string being above any notes in the first position, will present a little difficulty and their fingering needs to be committed to memory. The other positions may be taken in their proper order, beginning with the second—all being equally difficult, both as regards learning their special fingering and intonation. The position of the thumb on the neck of the violin up to the fourth position is similar to the first and third, the whole hand being placed exactly between the first and third positions for the second position, and exactly between the third and fifth for the fourth position. From the fourth position upwards the thumb will gradually fall a trifle lower, until the sixth position is reached, when it will have dropped quite underneath in the hollow of the neck near the button, the end of the thumb supporting the hand. The readiest means now of gaining proficiency in moving from one position to another will be to take scales through all the positions. The best arrangements of scales I know of are those given in "David's School," and in Schradieck's "Tonleiter Studien," the latter being unique in arrangement for elementary as well as advanced students.

The great difficulty experienced by all violinists is in the descending movement of the hand from the higher

positions, rather than in upward progressions, therefore where the beginner has to exercise care is in the *management of the thumb* when moving from one position to another. The hand must be quite free in whatever position it may be, and this cannot possibly be the case when the fingers are moving through the third to the sixth and higher positions, and the thumb's tip is allowed to remain where it was in the third position, *i.e.*, above the fingerboard, instead of having gradually dropped underneath the neck of the violin during the fingers' ascent. In descending scales the thumb must, without relinquishing its support of the fingers, gradually move back to its normal position.

To most students, learning the positions is a somewhat tedious operation, in fact it may be termed the most dreary of the driest portion of a violinist's course. A strange fact about the higher positions, sixth, seventh and eighth, etc., is that not one violinist in a thousand ever takes the trouble to thoroughly learn them, and were they ever questioned as to the position they happened to be in, the ability to answer with certainty would have to be preceded by several moments' hesitation. At the same time, in the second, third, fourth and fifth positions, all or mostly all good violinists know when they are in one or the other, and are equally at home in the entire compass of each. There is no doubt that this familiarity with the lower positions, and the reverse with regard to the higher ones, is owing to the lower ones being used constantly, while the higher positions are seldom used except for passages on the E string (and sometimes special G string passages), or odd notes on the D and A strings. The reason for their avoidance is the difficulty of obtaining as resonant a tone and true intonation as in the lower positions. Yet for vocal effects, smoothness, gliding, *pianissimo*, etc., etc., what would the soloist do without using the positions above the third? His instrument would no longer be the perfect solo instrument it is. With a better knowledge of the higher positions I am of opinion still finer effects

might be gained. Their extreme difficulty, especially to thick fingers, causes them to be almost unexplored regions.

Throughout the whole course of violin studies, passages occurring in these lofty regions are usually treated as special passages, and are learnt through some particular fingering of the passage, in which one finger bears some relation to the preceding one or that following, with the ear as general guide. This method is pretty universal and answers very well with the soloist, who has time to fix his fingering and practise the passages beforehand.

It does not, however, appear quite so successful with the orchestral player reading a new work at sight. He has not time to decide what fingering to take, and when in the middle of a passage, not being quite sure in what position he is playing, confusion is the common result. This is less to be wondered at when we consider that the tone of his own violin would be so lost amid the vast mass of orchestral sound that his ear would be no longer much help in guiding his fingers in the course of their destination. Except then by "finger instinct" and a few methodical fingerings (almost parrot learnt) he is, in the higher positions, neither certain of the correct stop nor of accurate intonation. This is why there is usually a scramble among the violins in an orchestra when attempting any passages they do not know above the fifth position, even though they might execute the passage fairly well individually and alone—especially with a little time beforehand to decide as to the fingering. How much better if they were all such players that playing in tune in the positions up to even the eighth were possible. And if they were equally at home up there as in the third position, at least one of the difficulties which hamper the ordinary orchestral player would then be removed. Of all the deficiencies of orchestral playing there are none further from eradication than this. There is hope, however, that time will alter these matters, and now that the number of solo violinists increases year by year to such an extent,

we may some day reasonably expect to find orchestras with strings composed entirely of correct and finished, if not *fine* solo players.

By correct and finished players I mean those who have sufficient talent to have learnt well all that can be taught, and technically able to play anything written, and by fine players I mean those who do all that and show some originality besides. This is usually the difference between soloists who have been perfectly taught by a great master and are exact copies with a perfect technique, but devoid of originality to improve upon that which has been taught them, and soloists who have also a perfect technique and style acquired from a great player, and still know where and how to alter that which has been taught them, without deteriorating in style. The talent, or rather genius, of the one would be wasted in an orchestra, just the same as the amount of talent the other possesses is sufficient, and not more than what is required in an orchestra, and at the same time inadequate for "great" solo playing. The number of great solo players would be very few if judged from this high standpoint. Still, on an instrument so difficult as is the violin, it is an achievement to obtain even *correct* playing *to perfection*. With more of this we might hope to have leaders capable of doing what little is nowadays required of them, such as marking the bowings in all the parts alike so as to obtain a correct and uniform phrasing and bowing throughout, etc., etc.

Speaking of orchestras, it seems to me when a so-called "leader" neglects either from want of ability or inclination to perform such duties as the above, he is no longer entitled to the distinction of "leader." He does not actually *lead* the band, or even the violins. In large orchestras a violin would have to possess a tone like a cornet or a trombone to predominate sufficiently for actual leading purposes in such a sense. In the old days, with small orchestras, the principal violin *did* "lead" in reality, because he was the one they all looked to for a sign to start, etc., separate conductors not



being in vogue. Now, on the other hand, all look to the conductor *if he be a conductor*. Except that the principal first and second violins, viola, 'cello, and bass are usually expected to be much better and more reliable players than the rest of the strings, I fail to see what need there is of distinction of any kind, especially when, as in many cases, there is no difference whatever in the matter of either experience or ability from the majority at the rest of the desks.

Great changes seem to be taking place of late years, and many conductors are almost indifferent as to the ability of their leader, so long as he can in tolerable fashion accomplish any little bit of cadenza or obbligato passage which may occasionally occur. When this is anything out of the ordinary, and requiring real artistic style for its adequate performance, then the mistake makes itself apparent.

A striking example was afforded some years ago at one of the great festivals, when the newspaper critics could not refrain from pointing out the advisability at future festivals of better obbligato playing, even if some solo player had to be specially engaged for the same. Similar instances have occurred at other festivals and elsewhere, and though not always criticized in the papers this fact remains recorded.

Amongst other duties expected of the "leader" was taking the bâton in the absence of the conductor through indisposition, etc. I suppose nowadays, with first class conductors such as Richter, Mottl, Lamoreux, etc., etc., the only alternative would be to postpone the concert.

As circumstances are, there seems to be little for the aspiring orchestral player to aim at except an increase in reputation and salary. And as time rolls on, I should not wonder at seeing these luxuries docked. Indeed, where there is little or no difference except in the "title" from the rest of the fiddles, I wonder why conductors continue paying three or four times the salary for a "principal." As there are no doubt a number of aspiring orchestral players among my readers, I may be excused

for explaining as above the true duties and modern tendencies in the status of principals and leaders, and thus drifting into what may seem a digression from my main subject, violin playing.

To return to further consideration of the positions, I should not recommend that they should be learnt hurriedly one after the other and then as soon forgotten; it is better to take them in the easy order afore-mentioned and learn each thoroughly and by degrees, with a sufficient length of time between to allow of the fingering being permanently stamped on the memory. Many recapitulations of them will have to take place before perfection is attained. Along with the positions should be practised ordinary slurred bowings, mixed with plain bowing of separate strokes, for one note either short or long. Of these mixed bowings there are endless varieties, all more or less simple except those regularly crossing the strings. Of these I will write later. The simple mixed slurred and detached bowings are done with the same motion of the arm and wrist as quarter, half, and full length bowings on one string. The position of the wrist and arm will simply depend on the part of the bow used at any moment.

## CHAPTER VI.

## On Gliding.

SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME OF THE MOST  
EMINENT PLAYERS.

**I**N moving from a note in one position slurred to a note in another position, certain rules have to be considered. This introduces us to the important subjects, gliding, glissando, and similar effects.

The general rule set forth by Ferdinand David and others respecting gliding from a note in one position to a note in another, is something to the effect that which ever position you happen to be in, allow the finger *last used* to glide from the note it stopped, and along the same string, to its natural place in the position in which the next note happens to be, taking care to stop this second note, if anything, almost before, rather than after the gliding finger has reached the position. For instance, the correct manner of gliding from say B to G on the second string—first to third position—would be to glide the first finger from B along the string to its natural place D in the third position, to which also belongs the second note G, this latter being stopped with the fourth finger immediately or almost before the first finger has reached its place in the third position. The same principle applies to gliding from any note stopped with either first, second, or third finger to a note in a higher position, whether on the same string as the one from which the glide is made or not. The glide will be made *not* with the finger you are *going to use*, but with the finger



*last used, i.e., on the note preceding the higher note if the glide is upwards, and with the finger used on the note preceding the lower note if the glide is in a downward direction.* The following will make this clear:—



The small grace notes only indicate the point at which the gliding ends, and this must be instantly covered by the second note to prevent any possibility of the intermediate grace note being heard. Beginners especially should besides bear in mind that the *whole* hand must be allowed to glide along the neck simultaneously with the gliding of the finger, except in downward gliding, when the thumb moves down somewhat in advance of the rest of the hand.

These, then, are a few explanations of the simple rules and methods for gliding from one position to another, and the same can be adopted in all instances with one exception, viz., when the second note to which you are

gliding happens to require stopping with the same finger as the first note from which you glide. Here there is no chance of any intermediate break, as the same finger which stops the first and second notes also performs the glide between them. Great care is here necessary to guard against the monotony of too lazily drawling this gliding with one and the same finger from one note to the other—the effect would be apt to remind the listener but too realistically of certain boot-jack episodes.

Though many players do it, it is not in the best taste to glide to a stopped note with the same finger which stops it, when the first note happens to be stopped with another finger than that which stops the second note. The exception to this is when the second note happens to be a natural harmonic. Here the same finger which makes the harmonic may glide to it whether this same finger stops the preceding note or not. The note preceding the harmonic may be on another string or on the same as the harmonic, still the finger used for the harmonic may glide to it along its string. The point at which to commence the glide in this case is a matter of taste—I should say at any note along the string which would form a component part of the harmony implied by the harmonic and the note preceding it. The point at which the glide commences must be managed so skilfully as hardly to be heard. If the harmonic be very high and the glide preferred so short as to commence only within a few notes of the harmonic, very great skill will be necessary to make the commencement of the gliding imperceptible.

Of course the first mentioned of the above methods of gliding to an ordinary stopped note is also available in passing to a harmonic. To a certain extent the character of the piece or particular passage will help the player to determine which is the better of the two methods to use in passing from a note to a natural harmonic. If the glide is done with the same finger as the harmonic, that finger will as soon as possible stretch out to its full extent, and thus give a more subtle

delicacy to the gliding between the one note and the other (harmonic). Whether the natural harmonic happens to be low or high in the positions, the whole hand in this case will not require to move simultaneously with the gliding quite up to the position of the finger touching the harmonic. The extension of this finger will make what difference there is.

Though I have by the above brief explanations and examples given the three most legitimate methods of gliding, I do not for a moment insist, like some professors, that all gliding must be performed *strictly* in accordance with the above limited rules. Rules certainly are all very fine for beginners and for those in the early stages of solo playing, such as the *most advanced* amateurs, but we do not exactly desire that every violinist should glide in precisely the same stereotyped manner, even though it may be correct and according to rule. Neither is it, and without violating the rules, at all *necessary* for every player to glide in the self-same manner. Here steps in the ingenuity of the player; and it is for the individuality of each violinist to decide for himself how he can with good effect escape the strictness of the rules, and rob them of some of their force, without really breaking them. In gliding from an open string to any other note above it, the same rules apply as above explained. The finger will, of course, be placed on the nut and begin gliding from it.

Several notes, usually diatonic or chromatic, slurred in one bow can be done by a "glissando," or the gliding movement of one finger either up or down a string. This is managed in the same way as "vibrato," the regular shaking of the hand corresponding with its free movement down or up the string, so that one shake moves the finger one semitone or tone, etc., according to the usually regular intervals of the passage. The shaking of the hand is done by a free wrist. The motion *from* the string lifts the finger slightly, assisting rapid movement of the hand, while the notes are as it were regularly checked off by a slight and delicate

pressure on the string caused by the shake of the hand towards the string. It is like shaking a branch of brilliant dewdrops, a shower of glittering notes, a sweet cascade of sparkling music. The angle of the shaking is very difficult to describe. To do this, as also vibrato, or slurred staccato, at say an allegro moderato pace, is generally acknowledged by violinists to be a natural gift. They are all three very closely akin, the wrist movement of the slurred staccato being perhaps the most complicated, and requiring the greatest command over the action of the wrist. It is often interesting as a study in gliding to note the peculiar manner in this respect characteristic of the finest artists. Take Joachim's\* playing throughout, and we have infinite variety in this particular feature of our art. It is clearly obvious to any violinist how well he knows how to make use of its means, and what an amount of individuality characterizes his manner of gliding. It would take more than my pen to describe the almost enthralling effects he often obtains by means of gliding alone. Almost unique in striking contrast to him is Sarasate.\* There seems to be an almost total absence of gliding; an effort to hide the interval between one note and another by leaving out all gliding, and substituting most electric leaps. Rarely does he emphasize an interval between two successive notes by gliding, and so rapidly is the interval covered that the effect gives the impression of there being absolutely no necessity for any gliding, his fingers seemingly reaching the interval without "shifting" the hand. This only proves that there is no law compelling you to glide at all if your taste prompts otherwise. It is all a matter of taste. Of course Sarasate *does* glide, as also does Joachim make electric leaps, but what I have above noted are the leading characteristics about the gliding of these two artists. The other part of their gliding does not strike one prominently. Lady Hallé's gliding is, if anything, rather more STRICTLY

\* The above was written when Dr. Joachim and Sarasate were still alive, and performing in public.

according to rule than is that of the above two artists, except for an occasional use of a striking mannerism common to many, but not all, players of the modern French school. In gliding, say, from B in the first position on the second string to B an octave higher in the third position on the first string, instead of gliding with the first finger to D in the third position on the second string and merely stopping the octave B with the second finger, Lady Hallé and others seem to glide with the second finger on the first string until reaching the B in the third position. I think I have only noticed this particular mannerism in instances when the one note happened to be on a different string. To violinists taught in the strictly German school such a mannerism is at first disagreeably striking, but it gradually wears off with custom. Other noted players have other characteristic methods of gliding.

It would be nearly impossible, and certainly to no purpose, to give further hints than I have already done on gliding. Varying the speed of the gliding finger and the strength or delicacy in pressure, and "stopping" either the gliding or the other finger with a force or delicacy, besides other possibilities, are all a matter for individual experiment and use. Some players frequently vary the first rule by extending the finger and stopping the second note before the gliding finger has actually reached the position to which the second note belongs. These and other variations in the opposite extreme are merely given as passing hints. In concluding this extremely interesting portion of our main subject, I must impress upon the reader that the great point to be borne in mind in all such matters is, really, that the effect desired and obtained be a justification of the means used.



## CHAPTER VII.

**Double Stopping.**

THE MAIN DIFFICULTY IN DOUBLE STOPPING—HOW TO  
GAIN INDEPENDENCE OF FINGER.

**D**DOUBLE stopping is a part of our main subject best learnt at the present stage, and though in itself a purely mechanical study, much knowledge and thoughtful judgment are required towards its perfect production. *Taste*, however, *does* enter into consideration, but only in-so-far as that it would be very bad taste on the part of the player when his double stopping is heard out of tune in public. It must, however, be suffered in this excruciating condition very often, especially by the player, before he may hope to arrive at anything like the standard of safety required for public performance. A knowledge of harmony, or at least of intervals, is as essential to playing double stopping in tune at all with perfect security as are thin finger-tips, for making, up in the positions, such double stops as minor sixths, augmented fourths, etc. The main difficulty in double-stopping is to know when the intervals necessitate the finger-tips being together or apart. Except by

ear-instinct this can only be calculated through possessing a knowledge of intervals. Anyone on recognising an augmented fourth, augmented fifth, diminished fifth, or minor sixth, will at a glance easily remember that the finger tips should be stopped quite closely together in order to obtain these intervals, as double stops dead in tune; while perfect fourths and major sixths will be stopped with finger tips a full tone apart, major thirds one and a half tones apart, and minor thirds two tones apart, that is a semitone wider apart than major thirds. Strange as this latter might appear to a harmonist with no knowledge of violin fingering, it is very simple and easy to understand for any violin player with a correct knowledge of the different intervals. So soon as this is attained there can be hardly any difficulty for the least advanced pupil in playing double stopping tolerably near the mark, or even correctly in tune, at a rather slow tempo.

The beginner will find it difficult at first even to keep the bow evenly on two strings from one end of the bow to the other. This should be practised first on two open strings very slowly up and down and afterwards crossing strings at the change of stroke.

To gain a beginning at independence of finger in elementary double stopping a "slow shake" on thirds is very beneficial. That is, for example, on the third and fourth strings (first position) B and open D played alternately with C and E, keeping the second finger down all the while on B, and pressing down firmly and then raising as high as possible the C and E several times in succession.

Other alternate thirds may be practised in the same manner. Scales played in thirds, sixths, octaves, etc., with long detached bows, and afterwards slurred, are indispensable towards independence of finger in double stop playing. In nearly every book of studies, as well as in most of the difficult solo pieces, are to be found double stopping passages of all kinds in abundance. To mention only a few: "Mazas," "Spohr's School" and other



schools, "Kreutzer," "Fiorillo," "Rode," "Gavinies," "Alard," "Dont," "David," "Schradieck," "Paganini," etc., etc. With such a rich store of studies to choose from, together with the few preceding remarks as some slight guide, the merely ordinarily talented student should feel it possible, with proper practice, to arrive at something very near perfection in double stopping.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**Bowings.**

SMOOTH BOWINGS—SOLID STACCATO—SPICCATO—  
SPRING-BOW—MIXED BOWINGS.

**A**T this point of the student's progress I should advise, as the next important step, a thorough study of the various kinds of bowings. Roughly speaking then, these may be classified under the following headings:—Smooth Bowings, Solid Staccato, Spiccato, Spring-bow, and a great number of what may be termed special Mixed Bowings, usually made up of two or more of the main or "staff" kinds just mentioned.

Smooth Bowings also include, besides plain up and down-stroke, a considerable number and variety of the same, mixed with notes simply tied with the ordinary slur. Smoothness is essential to this class of bowing, and it is this quality which makes it entirely distinct from the other three main classes, etc.

A very common error I may here mention, which is certain to waylay the inexperienced student, is that of regarding a dot placed above a note as invariably indicating that it should be specially played staccato. Careful judgment must decide as to whether the dot is merely a sign, contradictory of some slurring amidst the entirely smooth class, or whether the special character or importance of the note or notes really demand any

marked staccato. As is very frequently the case, a dot may mean no more than that the note over which it is played must not on any account be slurred to its neighbour—and that is all.

Perhaps several notes in a long passage will be dotted, which in like manner means little more than that slurring these dotted notes is strictly prohibited, the dotting having no reference to staccato proper. The most obvious of all instances where this meaning of the dot may be safely followed is where the speed of the passage prevents any possibility of the usual plain solid staccato being observed.

The proper manner of indicating these one-note-to-a-stroke smooth bowings, if necessary at all, would be by a short horizontal stroke above the note, making it clearly understood that they belong neither to the staccato nor the other classes. The part of the bow generally taken for smooth up and down stroke (non-slurred in contradistinction to staccato) passages, is the upper half (middle to point) and as much of it as possible, according to the speed allowed.

In order to keep the bow parallel with the bridge, the back arm—*i.e.*, from the elbow upwards—must not be allowed to move backwards and forwards with each stroke, but should be kept steady while the FREE movement of the elbow-joint allows the fore-arm to manage the straight running of the bow, with corresponding free and ready assistance from the wrist. It will hardly be necessary here to repeat what is the correct motion of the wrist in this class of bowing, as I have already done so in a previous chapter. I will merely add that in crossing strings the hand will be raised in crossing from a higher (or front) to a lower (or back) string, and reversely dip or bend downwards when crossing from a lower to a higher string, and this whether for up or down bow.

Preliminary to giving an explanation of the several varieties of pure staccato, spiccato, etc., and how they are all conquered, I will make a few remarks of my own upon the subject of the elbow and its relation to tone

management, as also to the flexibility of the wrist. The question is doubtless often vaguely pondered, at what height or distance from the body should the elbow be kept whilst playing, without preventing either the freedom of the wrist, or the drawing forth all shades of tone from the loudest *ff* to the most delicate touches. Should the elbow be kept near the side, or held high, or how? It would be absurd for anyone to lay down the law either way, as clearly, each will be found to possess its special advantages on certain occasions, whilst neither method can be said to answer advantageously as a regular mode to be adhered to on all occasions.

If we follow the method actually practised by the greatest public performers we shall, both for delicate as well as for loud playing, rather incline towards an outward arching of the arm—that is, we shall allow the elbow to be just sufficiently distant from the body to form a very slight curve of the arm from the shoulder to the wrist. Then, again, there are the players who adhere rigidly to the elbow being close to the side; and again, those who can only play with the opposite extreme of elbow being kept high all the while. Both these latter methods are exaggerations of the correct method, and they hinder to a great extent the proper action of the wrist, and, besides altogether hindering the possible performance of certain bowings, give generally a disagreeable stiffness to the performance and an unnecessary awkwardness to the performer. Numerous examples of the species flourish everywhere. Need I comment further on what seems to me utter narrow-mindedness on the part of those who practise and believe in these extremes? Certainly the one extreme is about as “sensible” as the other—the possibility of doing some of the most useful bowings being barred to either the elbow close to the body or the opposite extreme.

After due consideration of the advantages of the different methods, one comes to that usually safe alternative, the happy medium, for all occasions except

where, of course, special means must be used to bring out special effects. To become successful in this middle course, or what seems to be the most natural method, is simply to allow the elbow to form, if anything, a *very* slight outward curve from the body at a little distance from it. Of course, only when playing with the upper part of the bow will this curve be noticeable. I wonder what can be said of those who still insist on their pupils practising with the upper part of the arm tied to the side, intended, no doubt, as a drastic measure in correction of the opposite extreme of the high elbow. As often as not, however, it misleads the thoughtless student to imagine that the perfection of the bow-arm depends solely upon the degree of closeness maintained by the elbow against the side while playing.

The sooner, however, the student learns to avoid these unnecessary extremes, except as I have mentioned, *on occasion*, the better will it be for his or her advancement.

Now let us pass on from these few preliminary hints and special remarks to that most valuable and delightful species of bow-technique—*Staccato*.

Both in effect and execution it differs strikingly from what violinists understand as spiccato as well as from spring bowing. Still there are so many different kinds, degrees or shades of each as to almost admit of some shades of the one main class being indistinguishable from remote shades of the other main class, practically forming a connecting link of shades midway. The simplest of all is the plain up and down stroke, one-note-to-a-bow, solid staccato. This I will explain first.

Solid staccato requires at first very slow and careful practice in order to acquire the precise method by which it can be produced. To obtain a vigorous crispness of bite at the change of stroke, without any of the clumsy scratchiness one so often hears, some attention to the following instructions may be of assistance. First, take either the upper half or the upper fourth part of the bow. Commence, say, with a down bow. Place the bow on the strings ready to draw the first stroke, but before

drawing it, take care to press down the stick through the medium of the first finger, so that the hair touches the stick in the middle. After this careful preparation the bow will be ready to move for its first stroke. Now, always bearing in mind firmness without scratchiness at the change of stroke, release the pressure at the instant of moving the bow, and draw the bow rapidly and smoothly to the point for the first stroke. Then again resume the pressure between each stroke at the instant of stopping the bow, and also as before release the pressure the instant of moving for each stroke.

More than ordinary rapidity of stroke is necessary in order to save sufficient time towards the pressing down process in between strokes. The difficulty is to manage all this with neatness and to avoid scratchiness of tone. Careful and slow practice according to the foregoing directions will accomplish this. It will be found necessary to give a little extra pressure to the bite of the up-stroke; this being more difficult to effect than the down-stroke, the extra pressure will tend to equalise the two in firmness.

This species of staccato may be summed up as being a very precise, martial kind of bowing (*martelé*, hammered, as the French style it). It is not extensively used, even for slow staccato, and still less in any passages except those at a moderate pace.

Its rapid performance seems to be defined by the time necessarily occupied towards the preparation for the bite. Still, for firmness and emphasis, as well as for crisp lightness, it forms an indispensable feature amongst the great expressive resources of the instrument. It can be executed at any portion of the bow, or by taking the whole bow for each stroke.

Solid staccato at a rapid tempo is usually done by slurring several notes in one bow. The process of execution almost precisely resembles that of the foregoing, except that greater delicacy is here a necessary feature. When a large number of notes are slurred in one bow, the amount of the stroke for each note is so small that



the wrist will have to perform the pushing of the stroke, as well as the pressure for each bite.

This alternate looseness and pressure is by no means easy of mastery. There must be just sufficient of the one to avoid scratchiness, and the same degree of the other so as to maintain regular clicks without allowing the bow to run away unsteadily. This slurred solid staccato, like a perfect trill, is said to be a gift. Some players can only manage the extremely rapid staccato, over which they seem to have very little stopping control. By far the most beautiful and most useful is the moderately quick staccato of Spohr and Vieuxtemps.

Players who can do this form and speed of solid slurred staccato are the real, legitimate, staccato players, and no speed except the *prestissimo* kind comes amiss to them. Slurred spring-bow (proper), however, amply supplies the deficiency, and is more appropriately adapted for any staccato effects that are quicker than the ordinary *allegro* movement. Therefore those who are unable to do staccato in all tempos up to *allegro* cannot be said to be possessed of a staccato proper (of the solid slurred kind) at all. Joachim is\* a prominent example of a great artist, but with an imperfect solid slurred staccato, just as Lady Hallé is of one who possesses it to perfection. Unfortunately I never heard Wieniawski, though I suppose he was an isolated example of one who was able to do legitimate staccato at any speed up to *prestissimo*. A marvellous accomplishment if achieved by practice, but I think there is a great deal in the gift. All the same, a moderate amount of practice is absolutely necessary in order to obtain facility—even in tempi up to the ordinary *allegro*. Nothing becomes rusty more quickly than proper staccato, and happily nothing is so easily polished up when once acquired.

The slower the staccato, of course the more bow can be used for each note. There is a slight difference in the effect of slurred staccato when done with a down

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\* See footnote on page 30.



bow as compared with the more common up bow generally taken. Certainly the down-bow runs more smoothly, but it is not quite so clear and piquant as the up-bow. Therefore the up-bow is nearly always used for slurred staccato in preference to the down-bow. The up-bow is easier at the upper half of the bow, while the lower half suits the down bow best. Before attempting this slurred staccato, a thorough mastery should be made of the preceding "one note to a bow," and then the various two, three, four and eight notes, etc., to a bow.

Spiccato is a lighter kind of bowing than solid staccato. The characteristic sharp bite of the latter is dropped and its absence is replaced by the bow actually bouncing off or leaving the string slightly between each note. Although generally known as one-note-to-a-bow light staccato it may be slurred, several notes to a bow, as in the last movement of the Mendelssohn Concerto and elsewhere, when the effect becomes still more closely akin to ordinary solid slurred staccato, though not quite the same.

Slight variety may be obtained by the length of stroke varying from a mere touch to being a couple of inches long. The longer-stroked (and heavier) spiccato is done anywhere below the middle of the bow, while the shorter and more rapid spiccato is easier at, or near, the middle of the bow. This latter is the common ordinary, or "Moto perpetuo" variety, to the satisfactory performance of which every loyal amateur and many a struggling professional longingly aspires. It is of most rare occurrence to find a violinist of the modern French school deficient in this or any other kind of *bowing*. Neglect in this respect is amongst the German and English players. The more classical schools give scant encouragement to the cultivation of spiccato proper. Spohr excludes it altogether, and though passages in many of the classical compositions of the great masters lend themselves on occasion to this manner of bowing, yet had it not crept into use through

the medium of such men as David and Joachim it would without doubt long ere this have been condemned and crushed by the extreme wisdom of would-be critics. The heavier kind of spiccato is\* one of Joachim's specialities, and whenever opportunity affords he does not hesitate to introduce it. What a relief it forms to the stolid monotony of everlasting solid bowing! Anyone listening to Joachim's rendering of a sonata, etc., will at once note the endless resource it affords him, and will feel what a boon it is that critics, so-called, dare not forbid its use, because it is fostered by the very model from which they must needs base their arguments. Nor is the lighter kind of spiccato despised by modern classical violinists, Bach's Sonates affording ample opportunity for its introduction—notably the well-known Prelude in E (Sonate No. 6). Here again, Joachim sets the example, and everywhere with regard to the adoption of *medium* and *heavy* spiccato throws off much of the timid reserve which might otherwise be established.

The difficulty in this, as in all other bowings, as Dr. Joachim once casually remarked to me, is to hold the bow moderately firmly while allowing the wrist to be free and loose. Not that it is necessary to hold the bow very firmly for spiccato. That would be impossible. The first and fourth fingers need scarcely any pressure, in fact the fourth might be dispensed with almost entirely. The bow is held rather firmly with the second and third fingers, and should be placed on the strings a little below the middle and without any pressure, drawn entirely by the wrist unaided by the arm, down and up stroke rather quickly, using perhaps an inch of bow. The effect will be a smooth *pp* orchestral tremolo. After this preliminary practice, by which the angle of the wrist is obtained, keep to one note only and the same part of the bow, and again with a still arm raise the bow, entirely by the wrist, about half an inch or less from the string before each *down* stroke, taking care that both up and down stroke must be done entirely by the movement of

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\* See footnote on page 30.

the wrist. After this a third preliminary would be similar to the last, only this time commencing with the *up*-stroke and lifting the bow off the strings before each *up*-stroke.

Now try the first exercise of Kreutzer, playing *each note twice*—i.e., down and up stroke to each note—this being a considerable simplification—and only afterwards play each note once. Of course it is possible to commence straight away without any preliminary exercises, but then there is the danger of learning up to a certain point of proficiency but with a semi-stiff wrist. A little trouble, with my hints respecting preliminary exercises, will save much labour and worry, and at the same time insensibly lead the student and striving amateur into the correct method of *making* spiccato—to order as it were—at any given moment. We will now pass on to *spring-bow* proper *à la Paganini*.

Spring-bowing slurred is essentially a light tripping kind of bowing, on account of which and owing to the mathematically equal nature of its clicks it is chiefly suited to music of a trivial and gay, frolicsome character. It runs along with equal stress on each note—except at the beginning of a group (slurred)—the natural springiness of the bow having full play or nearly all its own way. The difficulty is to manage so as *not* to hinder this natural elasticity on the bow's part, but rather, after first giving it a vigorous start, to be able to prolong or check the bouncing at will.

Paganini is noted for having executed most of his staccato passages in this mode, in preference to the more solid kind pertaining to Spohr and the old classics of his period, a fact bespeaking the rapid rate at which Paganini must have taken his staccato. He evidently regarded slurred spring-bowing as the most natural manner of effecting slurred staccato at tempos accelerated beyond the *allegro moderato* natural to the quickest slurred solid staccatos. That "mongrel kind" of rapid solid "staccato" often "scrambled" as a trick by players with no gift for the natural solid staccato

proper, though certainly solid and rapid enough, is uncertain of accomplishment, even up-bow, and wanting in variety of speed and piquancy. Therefore, regarded in the light of being an extension of solid slurred staccato, it cannot compare with rapid slurred spring-bowing.

As solid staccato suits best for moderate tempi, so spring-bowing is most suitable for very rapid tempi.

The production of spring-bowing is immensely facilitated by an elastic and finely balanced bow.

The principle is that the right arm should conduct itself so as to allow the bow to bounce on the strings as long as it will.

To do this the bow must be thrown on the string with sufficient force to start the bouncing.

It may perhaps be as well here to mention that if the bow be a good one care should be taken not to become too enthusiastic, nor to try to start the bouncing too near the head, as this part of the stick's "anatomy" is always more easily broken than mended.

Of course the louder and the greater the number of notes to be played in one bow, the more force must be used in throwing the bow, and the reverse for a lesser number of notes played softly. The bow should not at first move onwards, but simply bounce for the first few notes, the wrist being kept perfectly steady and not necessarily loose at all. A kind of gently-sustained pressure at about the point at which the bow should commence moving onwards will materially assist the continuance of the bouncing.

Up and down bow are both produced in the same manner, but, as is the case with solid slurred staccato, the down-bow will sound slightly less piquant than the up-stroke.

To gain the requisite quantity of bouncing for so few as from two to eight notes (slurred), played alternately up and down-bow, all that will be necessary is a mere jerk of the wrist at the change of stroke, and chiefly at the down-stroke. The elasticity of the bow will do the

rest if the wrist and arm can only abstain from any clumsy pressure.

All spring-bow varieties of arpeggios are done in the manner just described, the only occasion for any special looseness of wrist being at the change of stroke, in order to raise or lower the hand.

In arpeggios the hand from the wrist will be raised at the change of bow at the back string and lowered at the front string. Crossing strings in spring-bowing must be done with a still wrist, and thus it forms an exception in this respect to most other kinds of bowing.

There are bowings made up of slurred, etc., with slurred spring-bow, which, however, really come under the heading of "mixed bowings." These will be next explained.

It will be unnecessary to enter into minute explanation of all the mixed bowings in use, when we reflect to what an endless number the list would extend. Therefore, after what has already been said of the regular or staff bowings, the student will have to rest content with the citation of a few notable examples, which will be specially selected on account of their peculiar mode of execution, and for the rest merely a few general remarks must suffice.

To produce some kind of systematic order in the different varieties, we will commence with general remarks and an odd illustration or so on the more common mixed bowings, and then first those special kinds played chiefly at or near the point, and next those played near the middle and heel of the bow. The beginner will do well to make at once a mental division of the bow into eight equal parts—that is, conceive as nearly as possible the half way or middle between the lower (heel) and the upper (point) part of the bow. Then the half way between the heel and middle, and also between the middle and point. These would be upper and lower fourth parts at point and heel and above and below middle. These fourth parts, again equally sub-divided, become eighth parts. Such are the divisions a violinist



must constantly have in his mind. Small portions such as eighth parts are usually sufficient for short notes, as quick quavers, semiquavers, etc., while for notes double the length, double the quantity of bow should be used. According to this, if a quaver receives an eighth, a crotchet will require a fourth, a minim a half, and a semibreve the whole length of the bow. These are the lengths which may be taken in a general way, but various matters may influence one way or another the extent of the portion to be used. For instance, in quick tempi, a note will require less bow than in slow tempi, also the degrees of softness or loudness required cause a lesser or greater amount of bow to be used. Of course two quavers tied together will take just the same amount of bow as would their equivalent, a crotchet, and in like manner any number of short notes slurred would follow the same principle.

Most students, and more especially beginners, will find it very much easier to slur a great number of notes in a given length of bow played softly than when played loudly. This is because the softer the passage the less will be the pressure required and the less the risk, therefore, of grittiness of tone caused through want of steady equality of pressure. It is only when the bow has to be used sparingly that loud playing is at all difficult. On the other hand, immensely more difficult is it to play softly when using long sweeps of bow. Quite early in the violinist's course is this difficulty experienced, of drawing the bow softly across the strings and of playing loudly while sparing the bow, at the same time it may be mentioned how infinitely more easy is the reverse process, especially of playing loudly and using long stretches of bow. It means hard work muscularly. Many of the soloists who have earned a name for "great breadth of tone" have only maintained it in pieces admitting of lengthy strokes of the bow to every note long or short. This is not possible in Spohr without violating the composer-violinist's own bowing-markings. Thus big-tone players avoid Spohr,

or else play him throughout mezzo-forte and with hardly any variety of tone. I will further remark upon these peculiarities of tone production. It will be safer, certainly, for the beginner, to try to learn the medium quantity to be used on most occasions, remembering that for loud passages, or a crescendo, more bow than ordinary may be used, and the reverse for soft passages and diminuendos. As examples of simple mixed bowings—ordinary slur mixed with plain, smooth, single note to a stroke—the following will suffice as specimens, the principle being the same in all similar cases.



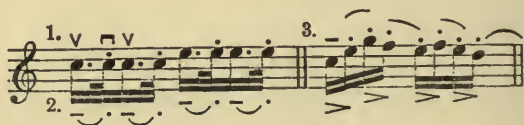
For Example I. take the upper fourth part of the bow nearest the point. Draw the bow to the point for the first two notes, use only an eighth part for each of the next two notes, and then return with the next note to where you started (the distance of a fourth part from the point). Again, for each of the two notes following use only an eighth part, and so on. The second example and the first are very similar. For Example III. either the entire length of the bow may be used or simply half. If the entire length, draw the first three tied notes to the middle, use an eighth part for the next note and draw the bow to the point for the following two notes slurred, and then use an eighth part for each of the two semi-quavers. The next remaining eight notes, being bowed exactly as those described, will require the same proportionate lengths of bow, only commencing here with *up* bow instead of down bow.

However little bow is taken, whether half or a fourth, the proportion will be about the same as I have explained.



These examples are very simple and ordinary, but an explanation seems necessary when so many players will insist on using as much bow for a semiquaver as for two or three tied in one bow, never realising the possibility of any natural division of the length of the bow. Nevertheless, this is the first step towards a mastery of bowing.

Leaving these general remarks and their illustrations, we proceed to the special mixed bowings in proper order:—



For the first of these three examples it will be obvious that the same quantity of bow will have to be used for the short demi-semiquaver as for the longer dotted semiquaver, otherwise the student will soon find himself travelling towards the heel of the bow. In order, then, to use the same quantity of bow for both, and still make the second note sound three times shorter than the first, the second note must simply be drawn just thrice as rapidly as the first. This would be all right if the second note were not meant to be staccato. When this is the case the first note should be drawn quite as rapidly as the second, in order to save sufficient time to prepare the bite for the other.

This is the process:—commence with up-bow at the point drawn smoothly and rapidly, taking for the first note anything under an eighth part of the bow. Stop the bow in order to prepare the sharp bite for the short second note, which must sound very staccato, and take care to make neither stop nor break between this and the following rapid smooth up bow, which is a repetition of the manner in which the first note was done, and each succeeding up and down stroke is done precisely as the first two. The wrist will be flexible except at the

moment of preparing the staccato bite, and the right hand will be turned upwards for the rapid short down bow stroke.

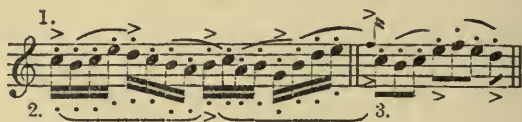
No. II. is a similar kind of bowing to No. I., except that the slurring produces a variety in the effect, just as the difference in character is distinguishable between any ordinary regular succession of down and up strokes. This is, whereas in No. I. all the dotted semiquavers are up bows done with not more bow than the demi-semiquavers, in No. II. more bow may be taken for the dotted note which comes in the same bow with the short note, the two slurred together being played alternately. The first note is smooth and the second staccato, the mode of execution being the same as in the preceding example, except that the two are tied in one bow, which brings a staccato note on the *up* bow, and a smooth note *down* bow, instead of all the smooth bows being the same way. At least double the quantity of bow will have to be taken for No. II., and indeed in slow tempos half or nearly the whole length of the bow may be taken. In this instance, whenever the bow nears the heel in the up-stroke, it will be better to raise the bow from the strings slightly between the long and short notes slurred—this is to avoid any grittiness.

No. III. resembles No. II. in having the first of the two tied notes merely smooth and without bite, while the second of each two tied is made very staccato; also more bow must be used for this second note than for the first smooth note. The upper portion near the point is usually taken for this bowing, but it may also be done at or near the middle of the bow.

Placing the stress on the second of the two notes tied is at first somewhat puzzling to beginners, but this is usually soon overcome.

It is a kind of bowing not so frequently introduced into solos as it might be. Rode, Spohr, David and one or two others have odd short passages of its vigorous characteristic rhythm, yet much more use might be made of it.

Our next three bowings will follow exactly the same principle of execution as the previous one, namely, the accented note will be the last of each group tied together, slightly more bow being taken for this accented note than for any of the other notes. The first note of any of the tied groups will again be smooth, and the remaining notes in between, simply ordinary slurred staccato.



The following three bowings are done at the point, in order to obtain the accent on the first note resembling staccato. This is the martelé of the French "with a vengeance," as the bow for this accented note up-bow at the point may be raised each time and be thrown on the strings, hammering the notes, though really, I suppose, the French expression is more applicable to some methods of piano playing, from which the idea possibly originated:—



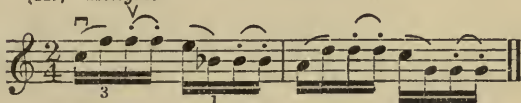
Of course these three examples may also be played at the middle, when the bow will not be raised, sounding not nearly so firm. The third example can also be taken at the heel, commencing down bow, when the bow will be raised for the accented notes as at the point.

The next examples are played at the middle portion of the bow, No. 1 being a combination of semi-staccato and spring-bow, and No. 2 of ordinary slur and light slurred staccato.

(I.) *Allegretto.*



(II.) *Allegro.*



It is possible to commence Example I. down-bow, but, as here, with only two notes slurred spring-bow, it is far more usual to commence with the semi-staccato note up-bow so as to bring the two notes (spring-bow) with a down-bow.

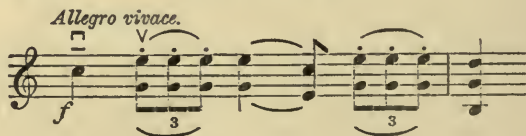
The first note is very nearly as firm as solid staccato, and, as indicated by the short rests in the first bar, the bow must leave the strings by a slight screwing round of the hand and wrist. The next movement is to screw the hand back with a jerk of sufficient force to make the bow bounce a little more than required for the two notes. This produces the first two bounces very strong and clear, after which a sudden pressure sufficient to make the hair touch the stick will stop the bow and check any possibility of further bouncing. At the same time the heavy pressure which checks the bouncing at the second bound also forms the preparation for the staccato bite of the following short up-stroke. Then, again, repeat the spring-bow, etc., over and over again.

Similarly, if there were three notes, spring-bow, the bow would be brought to a sudden standstill after the third bounce, and the pressure used for thus checking the bouncing would form a most piquant staccato bite for the up-stroke.

When there are as many as four or more notes in the slurred spring-bow, it may have a more piquant effect if the spring-bow be contrived so as to fall on the up-bow, or alternately down and up. However, this is a matter of choice for the performer to decide himself.

All that need be said of Example II. is that the two notes slurred staccato are up-bow, and are not played as firmly as solid staccato, nor yet by throwing the bow on the strings like spring-bow. The bow must leave the strings for each note and make a separate movement for the same, just as if the bow were kept on the strings as in solid slurred staccato. The effect is a kind of fluent light staccato, or what we might term the "De Beriot" staccato. Of course here are merely two notes of light slurred staccato. Up-bow suits it best. When more are tied together in one bow and played in the same light manner—something between solid staccato and spring-bow, but neither one nor the other really—a very pretty bright effect is produced, as say in the last movement of De Beriot's seventh—and best—concerto and elsewhere amongst his compositions.

In rapid tempo, forte, a passage like the following would be done spring-bow proper a little below the middle of the bow, where spring-bow retains all its natural equality and gains strength :



The same or similar passage at a slow tempo would require nearly the whole length of the bow for the three notes of the triplet, merely stopping the bow to separate each of the three notes by the gentlest break possible. A moderate tempo would require perhaps a separate bow for each note, at any rate if slurred not quite so springy as the above *allegro vivace*. These few remarks



on so simple an example only serve to show what a variety of methods there are of playing the same passage under various circumstances, and how much judgment is necessary to obtain the best possible effect.

Chord-playing is at first learnt at the heel with nothing but down-bows, lifting the bow off for each successive chord. This could be done, though not necessarily entirely, with the wrist, using two or three inches of bow quite at the heel. The effect is very non-legato, and suitable chiefly for any very marked emphasis. To gain a more sustained or singing effect of the chords a regular or occasional alternating with up-bow will be advisable. The character of the phrase, passage, or piece will be the best guide as to which kind of bowing is required, and then wherever an up-bow is necessary it should be contrived so as to be taken for chords which are accented least. When two full chords follow each other, both requiring a strong accent, down-bows for both will be preferable so long as the tempo is slow enough to allow for the loss of time in lifting the bow off for each chord.



In most cases where the chords are not clearly of a heavy or abrupt, slightly detached, nature, it will be seldom necessary to sustain more than one or two parts, chiefly the upper part (or note) of the chord, and it is then possible to play the chords, treating the other

unsustained notes like a double or a single long grace note, thus:—

The first example shows a single long grace note (a half note) in 3/4 time, labeled "(Caprice) PAGANINI. &c." with an "or," indicating an alternative phrasing. The second example shows a double long grace note (a whole note) in C major, labeled "BACH. &c." with an "or," and a "V" above the first measure. Below this, the text "instead of," is followed by a similar musical phrase.

Should, however, the *lower notes* happen to form part of a melody in a chord passage, *these* should be sustained after the bow has touched the rest of the chord in the usual manner, thus:—

The first example shows a chord passage in G major, labeled "BACH." with a "V" above the first measure. The lower notes are sustained, and the upper notes are marked "Melody." with an "or," indicating an alternative phrasing. Below this, the text "instead of," is followed by a similar musical phrase.

It would be practically impossible with the ordinary arching of the bridge to sustain all the notes of a chord



at the same time with good effect. For playing three or four-part chords Ole Bull resorted to a flat-topped bridge and succeeded in producing a good effect.

Clowns and the like manage to play some simple kind of tune arrangements in three or four-part chords by merely drawing out the screw from the bow, and so placing the hair underneath or between the strings that with the assistance of a well-neglected rosiny stick all four strings may be sustained simultaneously. Nothing artistic can be attained by such imperfect tricks. A single violin was never intended for the performance of quartets or trios, though by considerable ingenuity duets are accomplished with satisfactory results.

Chords, when bowed so that the notes come one after another, form arpeggios. These were explained under the heading of spring-bowings. Some arpeggios, are, however, not played with spring-bow. They are merely slurred in different ways or mixed with ordinary non-slur or other bowing. But whether legato or spring-bow, the method by which the equality of the one or the bouncing of the other is obtained is, by allowing the right hand to be raised at the lower strings and dipped downwards at the upper strings, and this whether it be up or down bow. This will seem strange at first, being somewhat at variance with the motion of the wrist in ordinary long bowings on one string.

After all, the object of the wrist moving at all is mainly to save the impracticability of a great deal of unnecessary raising and lowering of the arm in crossing the strings or in keeping the bow parallel with the bridge. All the awkwardness of a beginner's arm is the result of trying to accomplish straight bowing and string crossing by wrong movement of the wrist. Once this is correctly understood the arm will be saved half its labour. For instance, in arpeggios it is quite possible, though clumsy and faulty, to do them after a fashion with a motionless wrist, gaining all the bouncing entirely by the movement of the arm and at the down-bow alone.

But to gain the correct amount of bouncing with both up and down bow, touching each string equally and clearly, the above described correct motion of the wrist, together with a good jerk at each change of the bow, will be found immensely more to the purpose. The arm will no longer have the appearance of superfluous hard work and small results, but will appear to be doing wonderful things with ease. This is of course one of the surest signs of an accomplished player. I may say as regards arpeggios, that they are the simplest of all bowings, and if, instead of struggling to master them the amateur would try to understand the simple method by which they are accomplished, his ambition in this respect would be no longer unrealised.

It would be useless to merely multiply examples of special bowings. Those already given, with the explanations of all the various stock-bowings, should form a perfectly sufficient and sound foundation for the correct understanding and performance of any other variety of combination that may come before the intelligent student.

## CHAPTER IX.

**Tone Production.**

CHARACTER OF TONE—RULES AND CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO PRODUCE A GOOD TONE—STYLE AND EXPRESSION.

THE study of *Tone Production* will now receive our attention.

The student will wonder what I am going to say on this subject.

It must not be imagined that any hints can be given by which a violinist may acquire a tone better than his own, and at the same time out of harmony with his temperament and character. However much a violinist may practise or study to improve his tone, the most he will gain will be ease and certainty of method. Actual character of tone is so much a part of the player that the same peculiarity may be distinguished in him from the very beginning to the end of his career, however much—or little—the early rasping or later polish may tend to disguise it.

The student's aim, therefore, should be to gain certainty and facility of method rather than to try and imitate some other *character* of tone than his own. The inferiority of one's tone in comparison with another's may not be entirely due to the character of one's tone being at fault, but may be merely that the method of production is so crude as to quite prevent one's taste having fair play.

Take, for instance, two players, the one possessing a fair amount of genuine talent and the other only a scant allowance. Suppose the former has been taught on impossible principles from the commencement and the latter on the most fluent lines. What will be the result? The one of lesser talent will surpass the other in the effect he produces. There may be little character in the tone he produces, but it will be more pleasant to listen to than the disagreeable scrape produced by the hampered method of the former.

There are many violinists who have a natural aptitude for acquiring all the faults that can possibly be taught them, while some few others with more common sense, seem to avoid many of the errors of their master's teaching. Why do the latter class escape?

Because they have taste, and this directs their efforts towards acquiring a certain ideal tone of their fancy. They would produce this tone of theirs in simple passages even were their arm wooden and as stiff as a poker. Then again, the constant effort at producing this same ideal tone-quality in more complicated passages tends to release them from the bondage of some of those faults in method which, if they were blindly to labour under them, would cause their strivings so long to remain unsatisfactory.

Those, then, who in spite of partial faultiness of method manage to produce a good tone in simple passages, may conclude they possess talent for tone production. But even the more talented will find their best results much more easily gained by acquiring a correctly-trained method.

It is only those artists whose method is perfect who are able with absolute certainty to produce all the tone effect they desire.

True, the difficulty would be increased by a crude or thin-toned violin and flabby or stiff bow, or lessened by a full, rich-toned violin and a strong, elastic bow. Still it is far more often due to the player than to the instruments that better results are not obtained.

Now what are all the rules and conditions necessary towards good tone production in whatever kind of passage? All the explanations already given regarding holding the violin and bow, together with the position of the right arm and wrist in the many varieties of bowings, form the main ground-work of good tone production under all circumstances. Certain additional hints and suggestions which I will presently give may be of service. Brilliance, power, delicacy, nuances, shading, etc., depend on the character of the player and the shape and touch peculiar to each player's hand and wrist. Usually if a player believes in brilliancy he will play thus. If cold and powerful or rigid he will play in this manner, and generally have a large tone and so forth, while a broad character will possess all or most of the qualities combined. It is the latter broad character of violinist which we should strive to imitate if we desire to play almost every style of music. The man with nothing but brilliance to grace his playing would not be very acceptable in the more gentle or contemplative styles, and the massive-toned player would probably fall short in delicate nuances, etc. The most talented, however, usually only excel naturally in one or two styles, and therefore in order to become all-round players have particularly to cultivate the rest. The qualities of tone most difficult to effect are loud tone with slow bow, soft tone, crescendo, diminuendo, sforzando and general accents. The many different methods of producing all these make it a difficult matter to lay down any law amounting to a set rule even for any particular occasion.

The following may be regarded as safe hints:—For ordinary medium tone, not much pressure will be necessary, and only a correspondingly moderate amount of pressure from the resisting grip of the thumb. The bow will travel about an inch from the bridge on the second string, nearer the bridge on the first and fourth strings and a shade over an inch on the D. That is, the thinner the string the nearer may the bridge be approached without producing a grating tone. The

bow should always be well tilted over at the heel and gradually assume a non-tilted position by the time the down stroke reaches the point of the bow. This latter may be regarded as a strict rule in producing medium tone and may be frequently disregarded in the production of loud tone. The louder the tone the nearer the bridge is the usual plan. In allowing that position of wrist (unbent) at the heel which brings the hair flat on the strings, more power is gained, but great care will be required to avoid the slightest scraping. It should be resorted to only for very coarse effects.

Greater pressure of the first finger on the stick, and greater rigidity of thumb pressure, etc., are also necessary for very loud, sustained, tone production. For soft playing the reverse process must be observed: the stick held gently and with absolutely no pressure, and with the wrist curved in the extremest degree—even at the point—and the bow removed far from the bridge. Very soft flutey tone is produced when the bow is removed slightly over the fingerboard.

Making a gradual swell from one end of the bow to the other is usually most easily effected with an up-stroke. This should be so contrived whenever possible by altering the writer's bowing marks in pieces requiring such revision. Many of the principal classics for the instruments have, however, at least one good edition with all suitable fingering and bowing for the student's requirements. Great command of the bow is necessary for making crescendos, even when taken with the up-bow, but much more difficult will be found a down-bow crescendo. In any case the bow will be placed a good inch or so from the bridge as in *pianissimo*, and well tilted over, gradually becoming less tilted as the stroke swells to *forte*, and at the same time moving nearer the bridge. It is well to be economical with the bow in crescendos, reserving the greater part for the loudest portion of the stroke.

Thus the bow will move very slowly at the beginning of a crescendo for about a third part of the bow, and



then the speed will accelerate in proportion to the pressure and loud tone required. Exactly the reverse of the crescendo process is practised for producing a decrescendo. The position of the arm has a great deal to do with facilitating the crescendo and decrescendo. This then would be a slight raising for the soft portion, and lowering towards the loud for a crescendo, and *vice versa* for a decrescendo. But mind—very slightly as a rule.

Ordinary sforzandos can be attained in several ways. The bow may be set firmly on the strings or simply be let fall on them, or pushed or drawn. The heel or the point are most commonly chosen for any of these methods, but other parts of the bow are equally suitable.

In the first method care must be taken to set the bow on the strings without too much bite or scratch, unless a very harsh sforzando is required, and the same care must also be taken in “dropping” the bow on the strings. The pushed sforzando is used when no crispness of attack is intended. Many degrees of force may be used just as occasion may suggest—from the most furious down to the merest emphasis. The soft sforzandos or common accentuations of notes require little more than the slightest extra force or crispness, or perhaps a trifle more of the bow. Some surprising results are obtainable through means of the many varieties of sforzandos, but the highest skill is essential for their production.

The above hints on tone production, etc., and the method of improving same, are almost as much as can be explained of those means by which great violinists embellish their playing. Like colours to the painter artist—unless they are used properly and in the right place the effect will be without life or meaning. This giving life and sense in the use of the great variety of expressive resources is the highest and most exacting task of the violinist. Most violinists think they are solo players by the time they are capable of technically correct bowings of a few of the classical masterpieces. They little dream what a great deal there is to learn

after mastering the technique. It is one thing to be able to execute a passage and another to give life and sense and beauty to it. The latter can only be accomplished when, on the top of a perfect technique, the feeling and musically reasoning powers have been thoroughly educated and then developed by years of varied experience. Feeling is innate. It improves and enlarges with time. Musical reasoning is the result of study and perfects the style and taste. Most violinists of talent have a certain amount of feeling even if they have no idea of style. They then play all composers in their own manner. But supposing they were cultured musicians, with sufficient critical knowledge of the leading composers to be able to reason musically concerning the manner in which any particular passage should be performed, then their style generally would be improved and would possess variety.

There are also several distinct methods truly "Violinistic," containing peculiarities of their own, which have been handed down from their originators. In order to gain a clear idea of each one purely and separately from the others it is necessary to hear players exactly representing each distinct style. The majority of players nowadays make a confusion of several styles or methods, and play without regard to the composer whose works they happen to be performing. Spohr, Vieuxtemps and others, besides Paganini, all originated fixed styles, though unfortunately little is known of the best part of Paganini's style. He left his posthumous compositions evidently without any bowing marks or fingering, and those editions which have since been fingered, etc., are certainly wide of the mark. Critics should bear this in mind in criticising Paganini. If there had been no charm in Paganini's style and method, how is it that with even the pieces he left behind him he entranced all Europe—great musicians included? What would a piece of Vieuxtemps sound like were we similarly fixed as we are with regard to Paganini's compositions? Fancy no fingering nor bowing to the music and no

teacher to give any idea of the rendering! The charm would be lost, because it would be almost impossible to conceive what effects were intended. Fortunately we are in a different position with other composers than that in which we are with Paganini, as there are many teachers living who have themselves heard, or who have had handed down to them, the exact style and method of rendering their works. Besides, their printed bowing and fingering marks are less vague than those in Paganini's posthumous compositions.

Style and expression are indeed great studies, and intensely absorbing to the true artist.

It takes a thorough artist to fully appreciate an artist from all points. The general public only appreciate a few striking characteristics—perhaps mannerisms—and certainly would never have the curiosity to go and hear a player at all but for the enterprising catch-penny newspaper-puff tricks they may have swallowed.

I should hardly include among the "G.P." such lovers of music as those who, though unable from want of training to judge of minute differences of good or bad points, yet possess sufficient instinct to form a fairly accurate estimate of a player.

Important among other features connected with tone and expression is the natural power to produce ordinary *vibrato*. Like slurred staccato and trilling it is a natural gift and should require no explanation. It is almost impossible to the beginner and comes without any special practice to the player usually after one, two or more years' study.

It should not be attempted before the student becomes fairly advanced as, if forced or attempted in any other than the natural way, it is sure to sound very bad indeed.

Great pressure from the finger hinders its accomplishment as does any gripping of the hand whatever. I may here mention that many teachers and works give it as a rule that the fingers should always press down the notes firmly. Hence the anxious student falls slavishly into the habit of gripping every note like a

vice. In rapid passages this is exceedingly good, but if everywhere adhered to, many would be the lovely effects lost when one should more gently press down the fingers in slow or moderate tempi. Slow vibrato, soft tone, and gentle pressure of finger go together, while the increase of the speed of the vibrato should be accompanied by firmer pressure of the finger and louder tone.

Should beginners desire to hear themselves trying vibrato on a note, they may do so by resting the head of the violin against a wall, or on a table, for a while, allowing the hand to shake regularly from the wrist.

There is a peculiarly rare kind of vibrato—very weird in effect—done by an alternate pressure and non-pressure of the finger—always however touching the string. This is a thousand times more difficult and less useful than the ordinary vibrato.

Vibrato varies according to the shape of the hand or temperament of the player. Some can do it equally well slow or fast, while to others it is impossible except the fast variety. Here, then, is the same peculiarity between one and the other which we noticed regarding natural slurred staccato, and evidently, as I have before remarked, some relationship exists between the two as also between them and the natural trill. To a certain extent all three more or less defy that old nursery maxim bidding us if not succeeding to "try again." Of course the player must not conclude that the gift is not there merely because first results are disappointing. Perhaps he has not yet arrived at that state of technical proficiency requisite for the easy production of natural vibrato. Then again, see to the method of holding the violin, etc., etc., being correct and suitable to the formation of the hand. This done, even those who do not exactly possess much real gift for it eventually more or less accomplish the vibrato.

There is no fixed rule as to where or on what notes to use vibrato, but being a special kind of effect for expressive purposes it should not be used without the utmost discretion as to the quantity and place. There

are many places or whole passages where it would sound insipid and ridiculous. Yet how many players have the habit of wagging their hands with less reason than a dog wags his tail, as it pleases him.

Trilling can be done—like vibrato—in two ways, from the finger aided by the wrist, or entirely by the finger.

Except in very rapid trilling the latter way never sounds quite so round or so even as the former. The best trilling finger is the third, but occasionally the second is preferred. Trilling with the fourth is not often required. The trilling finger must come in contact with the string moderately firmly after each raising.

The height at which to raise the finger depends on the rapidity of the trill. For extremely rapid trilling the finger should barely leave the string at all. This is more difficult than it may seem.

Loose-jointed fingers have the advantage for rapid shaking. Violinists who are naturally stiff-jointed may soon improve their trilling, as practice loosens the joint.

But I doubt whether even practice will bring such fine results as simply possessing loose-jointed fingers. Sarasate's equal, rapid, and bird-like trill could hardly be rivalled except by excessively loose joints.

These natural advantages generally manage to give other players a long start. But if loose joints have the best of it in matters of rapid velocity, firm joints have the advantage in many other ways, such as grip in gliding, double-stopping, etc. So it is certain that one man cannot possess everything to perfection.

A slight accent on short trills slurred among other notes usually helps the production of the trill.

As a rule, when the note following a trill ascends, the trill should be finished off by the ordinary turn. Not so when it descends, unless the trill happens to form the penultimate of a section of a piece, when a turn should be made.

Double trills are made on thirds, sixths, and octaves, the fingering is the same for all three, viz.:  $\frac{1}{3}$  followed by  $\frac{2}{4}$  except when an open string can be used  $\frac{0}{2}$ — $\frac{1}{3}$ . Double turns are usually accomplished by shifting back



the  $\frac{1}{3}$  a note, this not being necessary in the first position  $\frac{0}{2}$  giving the required turn.

Most of the explanations so far have dealt with the technical part of the art of violin playing, that is, they have endeavoured to direct the student how to execute, and how to know whether he is either teaching or being taught, the correct means employed towards a technically thorough and sound performance. I am aware that the majority of violin students find it no easy matter to grasp even the technical part of violin playing without the aid of direct illustrations upon the instrument, and then constant after supervision from an experienced master. Still, though it is difficult, it is quite possible to the talented student to learn all that has been herein explained. It may have to be, so to speak, "drummed" into him. Where this fails the student must be indeed poor in talent. Looking at the matter in a high sense, we may lay it down as a rule that to learn to play the violin with merely technical perfection is less dependent on talent than on the qualities of the teacher, except in a few cases where the pupil has an ear and little brains, or is merely deficient in the musical ear.

The remaining features of violin playing, such as a thorough system of fingering and the application of the same, and of all the various bowings and other technical means best adapted to bringing out the several methods characteristic of the widely differing recognised schools or styles, a thorough analysis and explanation of harmonics and other peculiarities specially typical of the giant of violinists—Paganini—these, and divers other hints and suggestions suitable to each individual student's case, are best learnt from verbal explanations, aided by the immediate advantage of hearing and seeing the teacher's illustrations upon the violin. Really and truly must it be said that such teachers as are competent for this purpose are, as every good violinist knows, few and far between. Yet the fact that several violinists with only mediocre talent are actually able to play in



public at good concerts proves all that has been above maintained. Of course this class of "made" players must never be confounded with the born artist. The difference is, however, easy enough to be distinguished, if only by the repertoire. Pieces containing any of the features by which a true violinist can be known, are usually avoided by the "made" player. The Mendelssohn Concerto is one of those pieces that can be, and is, drawn upon by any class of violinist, hence it figures in nearly every examination syllabus, or, in its absence, pieces with the same absence of the true test of a violinist. No inference should be drawn that the writer has any contempt for this class of solo—far from it—or that he deprecates the craze for examinations. Of the latter, however, perhaps the least said of some of them the better, at any rate from this pen.

Style is as dependent on fingering and bowing as is the latter on style, each special style requiring special peculiarities of fingering and bowing. This is why a system of fingering would be of little use if learnt in a technical way. Like bowing it is best learnt in connection with style.

I have already hinted that there are certain pieces particularly suitable for the student's purpose, and frequently while they form the best examples of each particular style, they happen at the same time to be the choicest and most favourite inspiration of the composer suitable for the platform. To understand style in violin playing it will be absolutely necessary for the student to go through a thorough course of such pieces with a master of the art.

After each style of solo playing has been mastered there is yet a vast field for study among chamber music. This, being the purest style of composition in every respect, will require an extra pure style of performance. The first violin part is not always the chief melody, and therefore will frequently have to sink itself to allow the other parts to come to the fore. Much care and restraint is necessary towards this mode of performance, and an

extraordinary amount of judgment in order to give the requisite intensity of expression without marring the general deliverance or ensemble effect.

In England there is little encouragement towards the practice of chamber music. Where music is worshipped, as on the continent, chamber music is not so much neglected. Music is their chief "god" on the continent. On our island a bit of grass and any kind of a ball forms the chief national excitement. Our public is very useful to those who wish to "gull" and the same course is open to every one. The only pity is that it does not offer any field for the improvement and encouragement of art. We must see what can be done to alter matters in the future. In England the chief thing which attracts a crowd to a "popular" chamber concert is the fact that two stars are down for Bach's Concerto for two violins—not that this old fashioned work offers much scope for any new rendering or any very extraordinary ensemble or anything else.

As yet we have had no English violinist who has formed a school or style that might be termed the "English School" in the sense that we speak of the French and German Schools, etc. In conclusion let us hope, then, should any such style be originated in the future, that it will be founded on the best features of technique and the choicest touches of inspiration connected with our nationality—more can not be boasted by any folk.

THE END.



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